

Frequently Asked Question
COVID-19 Information
March 31, 2020

Q. What exactly is closed?

A. This has been a rapidly evolving situation and we have made adjustments to closures based on need. As of the date of this document, we have closed the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area and Sand Lake Recreation Area to recreation. Everywhere else, we have closed campgrounds and developed recreation sites. This supersedes a previous announcement that the entire national forest was closed to all recreation as well as an earlier announcement that did not include Oregon Dunes and Sand Lake area closures. Please visit [here](#) for the latest updates.

Q. What is a developed recreation site?

A. A developed recreation site is an area or location that has been improved for the purpose of providing a recreational opportunity. This includes, but isn't exclusive to, all trailheads, picnic areas, visitor centers, interpretive sites, boat launches, OHV staging areas, and campgrounds. Developed recreation sites may be a complex of sites and their access roads, or could be a trail that has some improvements (such as interpretive signs) along the way. Most trails are not considered developed sites, but all trailheads are.

Q. That seems drastic. Why have you closed so much?

A. The Forest Service in Oregon is aligning operations to support the Governor's executive order for residents to stay home to save lives. Several national forests across both Oregon and Washington have closed all developed recreation sites to address concerns about spreading COVID-19.

On the Siuslaw National Forest, this decision was made following a spring weekend that saw unprecedented levels of use at recreation sites up and down the Oregon coast. As observed over that weekend, keeping recreation sites open draws people in from outside areas and into situations where social distancing is difficult or impossible, which could contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

Many city and county elected officials on the Oregon Coast have voiced great concern about the pressure the increased visitation puts on their already limited health care system and emergency services; some counties and cities made their own emergency declarations and social distancing orders that include closing recreation sites and campgrounds. Our decision to close recreation areas and sites supports similar decisions that have been by Oregon State Parks and many communities to address the 'stay home' direction announced by Governor Kate Brown on March 23rd.

Q. Are you closing any roads?

A. We haven't closed any thru-roads at this time, but some roads that primarily access closed recreation sites may be physically closed. The road to the Marys Peak Day Use area just past Connor's Camp, South Jetty Road, and roads that access recreation sites at Cape Perpetua have been closed.



Q: Is this one of those legal closures where people can get a ticket? What will happen if people go into the closed areas?

A. This is a legal closure and people who don't follow the closure order could be ticketed. However, our goal is to get voluntary compliance, as our intent with this closure is to align with the Governor's executive order to stay home. If we come across people in closed areas, we'll inform them of the closure order and ask them to leave. If visitors do not adhere to the warnings, officers may issue a citation.

Q: Is it okay for me to park on a road next to the Forest and access trails?

A. Yes, except for where we have broad area closures, Sand Lake and Oregon Dunes recreation areas. However, state and local ordinances may apply in some areas. Users must abide by all Federal, local, and state laws. Blocking, or impeding, vehicle traffic or damaging natural resources may result in citation and/or towing.

- Visitors should check with local authorities to see if any local ordinances have been enacted.
- Check with local officials to see if your visit will add an unnecessary stress on local resources.
- If you get lost or injured, it may take longer than usual for someone to assist. Calling up Search and Rescue teams puts a large stress on county resources, volunteers, and their families and can strain an already strained health care system.

Q: I live next to the dunes. If I can access them without using one of your developed recreation sites can I do so?

A. The Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, as well as the Sand Lake Recreation Area, is under a complete closure to recreation to align with the closure of coastal state parks and address local community concerns about these popular recreation areas attracting large numbers of visitors to the area.

Q: Is dispersed camping allowed on your forest? Can I drive forest roads, park, and camp at dispersed, non-developed, campsites?

A. Yes, dispersed camping is allowed, and visitors may use forest roads.

- The closures of developed recreation sites across Oregon and Washington were made to align our operations with the Governors' stay at home orders in both Oregon and Washington.
- Please delay travel to outdoor destinations as much as possible. We'll be here ready for you when it's much safer for all of us.
- If you can't delay travel, please consider the following:
 - Visitors should check with local authorities to see if any local ordinances have been enacted.
 - Check with local officials to see if your visit will add an unnecessary stress on local resources.



- If you get lost or injured, it may take longer than usual for someone to assist. Calling up Search and Rescue teams puts a large stress on county resources, volunteers and their families and can strain an already strained health care system.

Q: Do you have signs up? Are you planning to barricade the whole closure? How are people supposed to know what's closed?

A. We'll use a variety of means to inform people what has been closed but we won't have the ability to put up signage or other means of notification for all areas. If you are unsure, you can call us to ask, or delay your visit until we're fully open again.

Q. When will you reopen?

A. The closure will remain in place until it is deemed safe for employees and the public to reopen them, and will likely follow state and local 'stay home' orders. The legal closure order lasts until September 30 or until conditions are such that it can be rescinded.

Q. I had a campground reservation for this time. Will I get my money back?

A. Yes, Recreation.gov, which manages campground reservations, will be refunding both the cost of reservation as well as their service fee. Look for communications from Recreation.gov about this.

Q. Are Forest Service bathrooms being cleaned and maintained?

A. Because recreation sites are closed, so are restroom facilities; we are no longer maintaining bathrooms at recreation sites.

Q. Are your offices open? What if I want to buy a permit?

A. Public services are being conducted by phone, email, or through web-based transactions. Before leaving home contact your [local office](#) by phone with questions. Phone lines and messages are being monitored. Messages will be returned in a timely manner.

